



## *Co-Sponsor S. 1900: High Speed Rail Investment Act*

November 11, 1999

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 600,000 members, I urge you to support *S. 1900, the High Speed Rail Investment Act*. By investing in high speed rail corridors, this bill would help to reduce congestion on our roadways, promote smart growth through the economic development of downtown urban settings and spur economic growth through enhanced mobility.

The average American driver spends 443 hours every year---that is 55 eight-hour works days, or 11 weeks of work---behind the wheel. Highways are becoming more congested. Annually, businesses lose over \$40 billion due to traffic congestion. Traffic congestion also leads to decreased air quality. Cars, trucks and buses are the biggest source of cancer-causing air pollution, spewing more than 12 billion pounds of toxic chemicals each year. Adding new lanes and building new roads only exacerbates the problem by making people more reliant on their cars, leading to even more sprawl. By supporting this bill the Senate can take steps to give Americans alternatives to sitting in traffic.

*S. 1900, the High Speed Rail Investment Act* introduced by Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ) with bipartisan support, would begin to address the historic imbalance between money spent on highways and money spent on alternatives such as rail. The bill authorizes Amtrak to sell \$10 billion in high speed rail bonds over ten years to upgrade existing routes to high speed rail, construct new dedicated high speed rail tracks, and purchase high speed rail equipment. Rather than Amtrak paying the interest to the bondholder, the federal government would provide tax credits, and states would match at least 20 percent of Amtrak's share.

Our nation faces many transportation challenges. Public transit, particularly in our nation's most densely populated corridors, helps to ensure that transportation challenges are met while protecting our environment. Although the *High Speed Rail Investment Act* is not the sole solution to our nation's transportation challenges, it is a key component. This bill provides badly-needed resources for reducing our nation's traffic congestion. Sierra Club urges you to co-sponsor this bill.

For more information, please contact either Deron Lovaas at 675-2392 or Dirk Manskopf at 675-7915.

Sincerely,

Debbie Sease,  
Legislative Director